

# Feet in Focus

## Ingrowing Toenails & Nail Surgery Information Sheet



**FEET IN FOCUS**  
Podiatry & Musculoskeletal Services

[www.feetinfocus](http://www.feetinfocus)

## Ingrowing Toenails and Nail Surgery

### **Ingrown toenails**

An ingrown toenail is one where the edge or corner of your nail grows down and cuts into the adjacent skin of your toe, leading to your toe becoming red, swollen and tender (inflamed). If left untreated, the inflammation can spread to the rest of your toe and the area becomes infected and may ooze pus. It may smell unpleasant.

### **Causes**

You may inherit many factors that make you more likely to have an ingrown toenail. These genetic factors may affect the way you stand and the way you walk. You may also inherit a tendency for your toenails to curl in at the edges rather than to grow straight. Wearing tight shoes, socks or tights can damage your nails and encourage them to grow into your skin. Incorrect nail cutting and trauma to the nail are perhaps the most common causes of ingrowing nails.

### **Treatment**

Prompt treatment by a podiatrist / chiropodist is recommended to minimise pain and this can often reduce the amount of treatment involved and also costs. Podiatrists are specialists of foot and ankle problems such in-growing toe nails. Initially your podiatrist may cut, file, and dress the toe and give advice on prevention; a review appointment is sometimes necessary 7-14 days after your initial appointment. If the nail is infected we are able to provide you with a private prescription of antibiotics (private prescription charged at £15-25) or they can be obtained from your GP. You may take painkillers such as paracetamol to relieve the pain.

If your toenail does not improve, your podiatrist may be able to partially remove a section of your toenail with the aid of a local aesthetic to minimise discomfort and this may be sufficient to allow the ingrowing toenail to heal and the nail to grow back satisfactorily.

If the above treatment is unsuccessful or not deemed suitable for you due to the severity of your ingrown nail your podiatrist may recommend a minor surgical procedure in which a section or your entire toenail is permanently removed. This may be done either by burning the nail bed out with phenol (a chemical) or by cutting it out surgically, under local anaesthetic.

### **Prevention**

Your chances of developing an ingrown toenail are reduced if you cut your nails properly. Cut your nails straight across and do not cut too low at the edge or down the side. Cut them after a bath or shower when they are soft.

### **Nail Surgery at Feet in Focus**

Many people experience discomfort caused by troublesome toenails. Often they do not seek surgery to remedy the problem as they think it is a complicated procedure involving a stay in hospital. However, this is not usually the case. Nail surgery can be carried out at Feet in Focus by one of our HCPC Registered Podiatrists, using local anaesthetic, this is a routine procedure regularly performed by our podiatrists and the success rates are very high. The whole procedure takes less than an hour for one nail and the surgery is then followed by a repeat visits to your Podiatrist for a redressing. In most cases this will cure the problem and stop the nail in the painful area growing back.

### **When might you need nail surgery?**

The most common problem that requires minor nail surgery is an in-growing toenail. These toenails frequently become infected and are often very painful. In-growing toenails maybe a one-off problem or one that comes back time and time again. Other conditions that may require nail surgery are grossly thickened toenails that press on the toe leading to corns forming under the nail and fungal nail infections.

## The nail surgery procedure

If your Podiatrist has recommended nail surgery to resolve your nail problem, the procedure will be explained and any questions or concerns you have will be addressed.

As the Podiatrist will be using local anaesthetic, there is no need to miss a meal prior to treatment. For your comfort, it is advisable that you bring a pair of **open-toed or loose fitting shoes, to accommodate the dressing**. Upon your arrival, you will be asked to remove your shoes and socks. Your feet will then be cleaned and covered in a surgical drape, leaving only the toe that requires treatment exposed.

A local anaesthetic injection is administered to both sides of the toe and, after a short time, this toe will become numb. There may be some discomfort while the anaesthetic is being administered, but this does not last for long. A tourniquet (a tight band slipped over the toe) is placed over the toe to temporarily halt the blood supply to it. The troublesome part of the nail is then removed and a chemical is applied to prevent it growing back and causing more problems.

The tourniquet is then removed and a dressing applied to the toe, which must be kept dry until the podiatrist recommends removal (normally 24 hours). Transport home should be arranged, and the rest of the day taken off work/ school. The rest will help the healing process. Any sports should be avoided until the area is healed or until you are advised it is safe by your Podiatrist.

## How successful is the operation?

The surgery is 95% successful with most toes healed in 4-8 weeks. As with all operations there are risks associated with surgery. The mechanism for achieving the best surgical result and avoiding complications is a system of daily redressing and review with our podiatrists undertaken at various stages after the surgery. Complications themselves can usually be revised or treated and should not result in permanent disability or pain.

## Some of the possible complications associated with nail surgery are as follows:

1. Re-growth of the nail in about 3-5% of cases
2. Infection (a 2% risk), possibly requiring antibiotics
3. A loose nail plate after the surgery
4. Post surgery pain.

## What happens next?

In general, if care is taken, the surgically treated toe should heal completely in 4 to 8 weeks, providing a permanent solution to the problem. During this time your Podiatrist will monitor the healing toe and give advice on caring for the toe.

## Advice following nail surgery

Nail surgery should provide a permanent solution to any problems that the nail may have been causing. Occasionally the nail may partly re-grow, and in such causes more treatment may be necessary. Once the surgery has been performed and the first dressing applied, you should rest your foot as much as possible and subject it to minimal pressure from shoes or hosiery. If there is any discomfort following surgery, a paracetamol-based painkiller may be taken. 1-7 days after the surgery you will need to re-visit your Podiatrist to have the toe redressed with a smaller dressing. Advice will be given on the care of the toe and a couple more redressing may be required.

## Costing

Nail surgery is performed as a package with surgery starting from £330-£500. Your podiatrist will discuss the most appropriate type of surgery for you on initial assessment and the costing. Examples of prices are below:

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| 1. Partial nail avulsion with phenolisation                    | £330     |
| 2. Partial nail avulsion with phenolisation 2 sides of one toe | £360     |
| 3. Partial nail avulsion with phenolisation 1 side on two toes | £360     |
| 4. Nail surgery <b>without</b> phenolisation with one dressing | £150-200 |